

TITLE HOPES ROCKED BY LATE GOAL

By **STUART EARP** Wycombe Wanderers 1, Woking 1

WYCOMBE Wanderers' dwindling hopes of retaining the Rothmans Isthmian League championship took another set-back on Saturday. After leading 1-0 from the 41st minute, the Blues threw away two vital points by allowing Woking to equalise with virtually the last kick of the game.

Although you can never rule out a late challenge from the Wanderers, these two points and the trio they missed at home to Dulwich Hamlet, could well prove decisive at the end of the term. Against teams of Woking's stature, three points are a must at home.

At the same time, you must give credit to the Surrey outfit who have taken on a new lease of life since the arrival of manager Tommy Tranter from Slough. Although unspectacular, they work hard for each other and there's no doubting the fact they deserved a share of the spoils on Saturday.

As for Wycombe, it's been said before and will be said again, they have only themselves to blame for not sewing up a victory. They had half a dozen chances to put the ball in that elusive net. In the end, they managed only one, from Dylan Evans. Dylan himself squandered two great chances later in the game.

Wanderers hardly need telling they desperately want another forward to help out the grossly overworked Tony Horseman up front and it is that factor that may mean missing the title this season. Defence and midfield are ticking over fairly well, but it is in front of goal that Wycombe are struggling. That point was brought home throughout the game against Woking when patient build-ups were wasted by poor finishing.

It must have broken the hearts of the midfield men to see their hard graft go wasted, especially Terry Reardon who made a rapid recovery from a cracked rib

a fortnight ago. Terry was the outstanding player in the home team, getting up well, winning 50-50 balls and spraying out some superb passes. If the other players had matched his determination, the result would have been a good deal different.

Paul Birdseye also impressed despite suffering from an old ankle injury. Paul has been the outstanding player at Wycombe this season and is performing too well to stay in this level of football. He marked dangerous Dickie Forbes out of the game in the second half and by making himself first to the ball, gave an example for all to follow.

Elsewhere, Mick Holifield turned in a useful 90 minutes as did Geoff Anthony, but overall, it was always a struggle for Wanderers. Perhaps they were affected by the fact that they were up against Woking and not title contenders Dagenham as scheduled. The Dagenham fixture was called off on Fri-

day due to 'flu in the Essex camp and Woking filled in as their game at Hayes was also off.

With Derek Cotterill facing his former team mates, Woking started well with Forbes, wearing a headband, spearheading their attacks. There was an anxious moment in the first minute for the Blues but no repeat of the five second sensation at Chesham a week ago. Instead, the game took a long time to come to life and it was 14 minutes before Wanderers got in their first strike, a Ray Eaton thunderbolt which flew wide.

Woking hit back with interest in the 20th minute and only the fine reactions of John Maskell stopped them going ahead. Steve Cosham ran well and crossed to Forbes whose well struck drive was saved by the 'keeper at full length. Thanks to an efficient off-side trap, Maskell was seldom worried again in the half.

At the other end Wanderers seemed to rely too much on the flicks and nudges of Horseman and concentrated almost exclusively in breaking through the middle. Only when Evans and Holifield exploited the left wing did the Blues begin to look dangerous. Even then, Wycombe were unable to mount any

prolonged pressure and the goal, when it came, was something of a surprise.

Roger Steer gave away a corner which Graham Mackenzie, included in the side after a sound performance at Chesham last week, drove to the six yard line. Evans leapt high above a static defence to ram home a near post header. It was an ideal time to break through but after half time, Wycombe were unable to capitalise on their one goal lead.

They began the new period well enough and only a brave save by Norman halted Holifield. Woking rallied quickly with Alan Morton running 30 yards across the area and then sending a shot only inches past the upright.

For the next 20 minutes Wanderers pressed forward strongly. Norman saved well from Horseman after 57 minutes and 30 seconds later Evans spurned a great chance by sending the ball over the top on the volley from six yards range. Four corners followed in quick succession and from the third Evans was only a whisker away from getting a touch with the goal at his mercy.

Woking weathered this storm and began to hit back. With Cotterill grafting hard in midfield Wycombe's momentum slowed visibly. Morton almost capitalised in the 73rd minute when he glanced a clear header wide of the upright.

As Woking rallied in the closing stages, Wycombe's single goal lead looked in jeopardy. It was always on the cards that the Surrey men would snatch an equaliser and after Geoff Chappell had seen a swerving shot well held by Maskell, Wanderers threw away two points in the first minute of injury time.

The goal was similar to Wycombe's. A corner was driven across the box to Graham Cooper. He returned it to the six yard line where centre back Martin Watford raced in and deftly headed past Maskell.

There was scarcely time to restart the game and Wycombe trooped off knowing that their championship aspirations had taken a bad knock even though Hendon went down at home to Sutton.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; P. Birdseye, K. Mead, D. Bullock, R. Eaton; G. Mackenzie, T. Reardon, M. Holifield; D. Evans, A. Horseman (sub H. Kennedy 85 mins.), G. Anthony.

WOKING: C. Norman; R. Stear, R. Poole, M. Watford, G. Cooper; A. Roberts (sub G. Chapple 71 mins.), D. Cotterill, A. Brown; S. Cosham, A. Morton, R. Forbes.

Referee: A. Ward (Southgate).

Half time: 1-0. **Goalscorers:**

Wycombe: Evans (41), Woking: Watford (90).

Official paying attendance: 1,200.

Approx. total: 1,500.

ROTHMANS ISTHMIAN LEAGUE division one

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	Pen Pts	CD
Enfield	26	16	6	4	52	20	54	54	
Ilford	29	16	6	7	39	27	54	90	
Wycombe	29	16	8	6	46	29	53	20	
Dagenham	26	16	4	6	60	34	52	20	
Hendon	29	15	7	7	41	23	52	14	
Slough	33	14	9	10	49	37	51	50	
Dulwich	33	15	5	13	52	32	50	58	
Sutton	28	13	9	6	53	32	48	10	
Tooting	25	13	6	6	45	27	45	90	
L'head	28	13	6	9	50	39	45	60	
Barking	30	13	6	11	44	41	45	58	
Hitchin	33	12	8	13	38	42	44	10	
Staines	28	11	7	10	30	26	40	40	
Kingston	31	12	4	15	45	71	40	30	
Hayes	32	8	15	9	31	34	39	64	
Woking	33	11	6	16	48	51	39	84	
W'stow	31	9	9	13	35	45	36	70	
Bishop's	27	9	7	11	30	32	34	10	
Oxford	30	6	8	14	24	42	32	34	
Southall	31	7	6	18	40	54	27	30	
L'stone	31	5	9	17	23	48	24	50	
Clapton	35	2	1	32	12	101	7	90	



ISTHMIAN
LEAGUE

PAUL BIRDSEYE

... outstanding

W.C.